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How Pajaro river bed looked before it rained.

City failed to clear river before rains

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Worried about the Pajaro River's penchant for flooding during heavy rains, Watsonville City Council members said two months ago that they wanted the riverbed cleared out before the winter rains came. But the rains are here, and the overgrown trees and bushes that clog the river bed haven't been touched.

City staffers said they tried, but couldn't get anything done in time.

Public Works Department officials had hoped to use a new bulldozer, which was being purchased for the city's landfill site, to clear the more cluttered sections of the riverbed before the rains. But the bulldozer didn't arrive in time.

"It was just too late," City Manager John Radin said this morning. "There's no way you can put a bulldozer in there now with the river going up."

Staffers had been instructed to clear the riverbed even though another agency, Pajaro Storm Drainage Maintenance District, is actually responsible for it. Unfortun-

ately, county Public Works Department staffers say there is no money left in the drainage maintenance district.

The council had also hoped to get the job done for free. Councilman Roy Ingersoll suggested the city ask the Army Corps of Engineers to take on the project.

But Radin said Corps projects take from two to three years to get proper approval.

Public Works Director John Cooper attended a meeting with the Corps that was called by Supervisor E. Wayne Moore Jr. to discuss similar flooding problems caused by the overflow of the Salsipuedes and Corralitos creeks.

Although the county will pursue federal funds through the Corps for those flooding problems, Radin said Cooper learned that the length of time required to approve a project for the Pajaro River would be too long.

Meanwhile, the coffers of the storm drainage district remain empty. A proposal has been made to create another district with the same boundaries to levy taxes to pay for storm drainage projects.

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN
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